

Policies of Educational Services for the Aging Society

—A Preliminary Comparative Analysis between China and the United States—

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Abstract: This study is a preliminary comparative analysis of the policies of educational services for aging societies in China and in the United States. The analytical framework of the educational services in this study was focused on four aspects: (1) research to support older people, (2) education of the younger generation to prepare for the aging society, (3) provision of an educational environment for older people, (4) training of workforces in the field of aging. This study was done in four steps. The first step was to examine the most influential laws relating to the aging society both in China and the United States. The second step was to analyze China's policies of educational services for the aging society presenting in the "Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting the Rights and Interests of the Older People". Thirdly, the United States' policies of educational services for the aging society presenting in the "Older Americans Act" were illustrated. Lastly, the comparative study was carried out as follows: (1) an analysis of the objectives offered by different systems, (2) a comparison between the two countries' policies to ascertain similarities and differences, (3) recommendations based on the knowledge obtained in the comparative study for the purpose of providing some constructive suggestions for the policy makers, researchers and educators in China.

Key words: aging society, older people, educational services, comparative study, China, the United States

Introduction

The world population is rapidly aging. According to the World Health Organization, between 2000 and 2050 the proportion of the world's population over 60 years and older will double from about 11% to 22%. The absolute number of people aged 60 years and older is expected to increase from 605 million to 2 billion over the same period.⁽¹⁾

Population aging is widespread across the world, but countries vary significantly in terms of the degree, time and pace. China has been becoming an aging society at a rapid pace since the turn of the twenty-first century. The number of people aged 65 years and older in China exceeded 110 million in 2010; by 2030 the number will increase by more than 100 million, according to the United Nations. By 2050 a quarter of the population will be over 65 years and older.⁽²⁾

As of July 2013, the United States has a total resident population of 310 million, making it the third-most populous country in the world. People aged 65 years and

older were 40 million, made up about one-eighth, 12.8% of its total population in 2011. But this number is projected to more than double to 89 million by 2050.⁽³⁾

Different from many developed countries, like Japan whose citizens aged 65 years and older account for 25.1% (2013) of the overall population,⁽⁴⁾ the United States relatively has a smaller share, 12.8%, of older people when compared with many developed countries. However, the pace of population aging is projected to accelerate in the next 30 years. The situation in the United States is more like the situation in China. China's population aged 65 years and older currently stands at 11.8% (2013), yet recent declines in fertility are slowing down its population growth and significantly increasing the aging population. China is also expected to have an acceleration of aging in the coming decades.

Aware of an increasing number of the aging people and recognizing the need of a serious concern for older people,

many countries have developed and applied policies designed to enhance the lives of older people to allow them to enjoy their lives in mind and in body, fully and freely, as well as to enjoy their advancing years in peace, health and security. In these policies, there has always been considerable attention given to educational services: which include research to support and benefit older people, education of the younger generation to prepare for the aging society, provision of an educational environment to enrich older people's lives, and training of workforces in the field of aging. Educational services have always had a significant role in aging issues in many countries.

This study is a comparative analysis of the policies of educational services for aging societies in both China and the United States. This study was done in four steps. The first step was to examine the most influential laws relating to the aging societies and the older people both in China and the United States. This showed the governments' attitudes and illustrated the concerns for the older people and the objectives in the policies. The second step was to analyze China's policies in the related laws including research to support and benefit the older people, education of the younger generation to prepare for the aging society, provision of an educational environment to enrich the older people's lives, and training of workforces in the field of aging. Thirdly, in accordance with China's policies, the same aspects of educational services were examined in relation to the United States. Lastly, a comparative study between China and the United States was carried out as follows: (1) an analysis of the basic concerns and objectives offered by different systems, (2) a comparison between the two countries' policies to ascertain similarities and differences, (3) recommendations in order to provide some constructive suggestions for the policy makers, researchers and educators in China based on the knowledge obtained by the comparative study.

The ultimate purpose of this study is to help the policy makers, researchers and educators in China to become increasingly aware of the importance of understanding the educational services for the aging society and the older people. The study will also help them to understand their own strengths and weaknesses in relation to other countries,

as well as to help them to identify areas of improvement, eventually to learn from other countries in order to improve their own policies.

1 Laws for the Aging Society and Older People in China and the United States

In this chapter, as for China, the "Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting the Rights and Interests of the Older People" was examined. This is the first law issued in China's law history for the older people on August 29, 1996,⁽⁵⁾ and its latest amendment was passed on December 28, 2012,⁽⁶⁾ effective from July 2013. For the United States, the "Older Americans Act" first issued in July 1965,⁽⁷⁾ amended in 2013⁽⁸⁾ for the fiscal year 2014-2018 was examined. Both laws, at the first national level in China and at Federal level in the United States, are initiatives aimed at providing comprehensive services for the older people in their countries. And also both laws were amended in recently years; the latest amendments were 2012 in China and 2013 in the United States. Although older people may receive various services under many other national or Federal programs, today the "Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting the Rights and Interests of the Older people" in China and the "Older Americans Act" in the United States are still considered to reflect most of the national issues and to be the major policies on the aging society, for both laws are considered to authorize the widest and most comprehensive services through the countries' networks. Thus, a good understanding and a comparative study could represent the concerns, policies and contexts of services for the aging society and the older people both in China and the United States.

(1) Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting the Rights and Interests of the Older People

Adopted at the 21st meeting of the Standing Committee of the Eighth National People's Congress on August 29 1996, the "Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting the Rights and Interests of the Older People" was the first law for the purpose of protecting the sovereign rights and interests of the older people in the history of China. Therefore the law can be considered an integral component of the major national strategies to strengthen the capacities of the country in response to the special needs of the aging

society.

The law was amended in accordance with the Decision on Amending Some Laws at the 10th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Eleventh National People's Congress on August 27, 2009. It was again amended at the 30th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Eleventh National People's Congress on December 28, 2012, which is effective from July 2013. This most recent reauthorization is divided into nine chapters. Chapter 1: General Provisions, Chapter 2: Maintenance and Support by Families, Chapter 3: Social Security, Chapter 4: Social Services, Chapter 5: Social Welfare, Chapter 6: Housing Environment, Chapter 7: Participation in Social Development, Chapter 8: Legal Responsibility, Chapter 9: Supplementary Provision. The purposes stated in the law are to improve the social security system for the aging society, to develop and apply a better condition step by step to allow older people to enjoy their advancing years in peace, well-being, health and security, and to allow them to participate in social development, so that they can be provided for, have access to necessary medical care, have opportunities for their own pursuits, studies and enjoy themselves.

(2) Older Americans Act

The United States Congress passed the "Older Americans Act" in 1965 in response to concern by policy makers about a lack of community social services for the older individuals. The "Older Americans Act" of 1965 was the first Federal level initiative aimed at providing comprehensive services for the older individuals. The Act established authority for grants to the States for community planning, social services, research and development projects, and personnel training in the field of aging. The Act also established the Administration on Aging to administer the newly created grant programs and to serve as the Federal focal point on matters concerning the older individuals.

In 2013 the United States congress reauthorized the latest "Older Americans Act" in its entirety, effective through fiscal year 2014-2018. This most recent reauthorization is divided into eight titles. Title 1 is a declaration of objectives. Title 2 is the establishment of the Administration on Aging to carry out the provisions of the Act. Title 3 is the provision

of Federal grants for state and community programs on aging. Title 4 is the creation of activities for health, independence, and longevity. Title 5 is the establishment of a program for engaging low-income senior citizens in community service employment and volunteer opportunities. Title 6 is the establishment of grants for Native Americans-focused programs on aging. Title 7 is the creation of state grants for vulnerable elder rights protection activities. Title 8 is about geriatrics and gerontology. The "Older Americans Act" authorizes a wide array of service programs through a national network of 56 state agencies on aging. The purpose of the "Older Americans Act" is to ensure equal opportunity to the fair and free enjoyment of adequate income in retirement; the best possible physical and mental health services without regard to economic status; suitable housing; restorative and long term care; opportunity for employment; retirement in health, honor, and dignity; civic, cultural, educational and recreational participation and contribution; efficient community services; immediate benefit from proven research knowledge; freedom, independence, and the exercise of self-determination; and protection against abuse, neglect and exploitation.

2 China's Policies of Educational Services for the Aging Society

This chapter focused on policies of educational services for the aging society in four aspects: (1) research to support the older people, (2) education of the younger generation to prepare for the aging society, (3) provision of an educational environment for the older people, (4) training of workforces in the field of aging by exploring the implications of the initiative and most influential law, the "Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting the Rights and Interests of the Older People" adopted in 1996, amended in 2012 and effective from 2013.

(1) Research to Support the Older People

As the trend towards an aging society has become prominent from 1990s, in order to enable the society to deal with the basic needs of older people, research to support the coming aging society has been greatly encouraged in the Law. This says that the government should take measures for promoting scientific research in geriatric illnesses, and

the government should support research activities related to the science of the aging as well as establish an information base to provide the statistic resources about the services, employment and recent state of older people. The Law gives high priority to research in order that the knowledge obtained by such research can provide scientific backing for a sounder basis for effective planning of the well-being of older people.⁽⁹⁾

(2) Education of the Younger Generation to Prepare for the Aging Society

Recognizing the importance that people at all ages should engage in the aging society, the Law requires:

- (a) The promotion of Chinese people's virtues of respecting and providing for older people. Traditionally to respect, to help and provide for older people are considered to be virtues among Chinese people.
- (b) Education by the government agencies of the general public about the aging situation in China, so as to increase the concern for the aging society.
- (c) The enforcement of social values by which older people are respected, taken good care of and helped.
- (d) The recognition of the necessity for the organizations of younger people, such as schools and kindergartens, to educate the younger generation to protect the rights and interests of the older people. It is emphasized that such education must start at an early age from children and teenagers.
- (e) A coordinated effort by the mass media such as radio programs, television programs, movies, newspaper and internet etc. to reflect the lives of the older people, as well as to educate the public to respect the legal rights of and to serve, for the older people.⁽¹⁰⁾

Education of the younger generation to prepare for the aging society is greatly promoted in the Law.

(3) The Provision of an Educational Environment

Education is considered as one of the most important issues concerning the quality of the lives of older people. The policies of the provision of an educational environment in the Law can be categorized as follows:

- (a) Older people have the right to receive continued education and education is considered as one of the

basic human rights of the older people.

- (b) It is the duty of the government to provide funding for the education of the older people.
- (c) It is the duty of the government to take leadership in making comprehensive educational plans, and to develop education programs for older people, as well as to integrate these in continued educational and community educational systems.
- (d) The government should encourage organizations to run well all types of schools for older people.
- (e) Art, scientific, and memorial museums, public libraries, culture centers, movie theaters, sport facilities, parks and tourist sites should be open freely or with preference fares for older people. It is the duty of the government to take measures to provide cultural, sports and recreational activities in order to enrich the cultural lives of older people.⁽¹¹⁾

As a basic human right, education must be made available without discrimination for older people. The government, non-government organizations and all the concerned have responsibilities in providing an educational environment for older people. Public educational facilities must be available for educational, cultural and recreational activities by older people, in order that they can have access to learn and to enjoy their advancing years.

(4) Training of Workforces in the Field of Aging

To guarantee that older people live lives of fulfillment, and contentment, it is necessary to train workforces to work with and serve the older people in the fields of health, nutrition, housing, social welfare, security, employment and education. The Law says that the government should promote and encourage higher education, middle vocational schools and vocational training organizations to establish the specialty and training programs in order to train personnel and specialists in the field of gerontology.⁽¹²⁾

The dramatic increase in the number and proportion of older people is calling for a significant increase in the need for the development of training and educational policies, as well as in the need of programs for the younger generation in educational system to train the workforces in the field of aging.

3 Policies of Educational Services for the Aging Society in the United States

Based on the "Older Americans Act" adopted first in 1965, and the latest amendment issued in 2013, effective from 2014-2018, in accordance with the previous chapter of study about China, this chapter also focused on the policies of educational services for the aging society in four aspects: (1) research to support older individuals, (2) education of the younger generation to prepare for the aging society, (3) provision of an educational environment for older individuals, (4) training of workforces in the field of aging by exploring the implications of the most influential law: the "Older Americans Act" of the United States as mentioned above.

The "Older Americans Act" is considered as the principle piece of federal legislation designed to provide a range of community services to adults age sixty and above. It is reflected in a range of national policy documents and can be judged to have generated significant improvements in the lives of the older individuals. The strategic and operational policy elements provided in the "Older Americans Act" can serve as a framework for the analysis and comparison of the national policies in research, training and educational programs for the aging society and the older individuals.

(1) Research to Support Older Individuals

The Act gives high priority to research related to the needs of the aging society. It should be the duty and function of the administration to develop plans, conduct and arrange research in the field on aging. And it is considered to be very important to provide assistance through research to help older individuals, towards immediate benefit from proven research knowledge which can sustain and improve their health, happiness, and economic security. The research areas required in the Act as follows:

- (a) To conduct research on the needs and how to best meet the needs of older individuals.
- (b) To conduct basic and applied research towards the development of information related to older individuals.
- (c) To conduct research related to abuse, neglect and exploitation of older individuals and causes, prevention, identification and treatment.

- (d) To conduct applied social research and analysis to improve access to and delivery of services for older individuals.
- (e) To publish summaries and analyses of the results of evaluation research with an interest in aging and to provide for the dissemination of the results of the research.
- (f) To conduct research and demonstration projects to identify innovative, cost-effective strategies for modifying state systems.
- (g) To promote research on legal, organizational, or training impediments to providing services to older individuals.
- (h) To develop research plans, and conduct and arrange for research, in the field of American Native aging with a special emphasis on the gathering of statistics on the status of older individuals who are Native Americans.

Research activities are considered to be instrumental in formulating, evaluating and implementing policies and programs in the field of aging to meet the needs of older individuals for supportive services.⁽¹³⁾

(2) Education of the Younger Generation to Prepare for the Aging Society

It is very important to know the impact of an aging population on development for the aging to be fully understood and protected by all ages, especially by the younger generation. It is stated in the Act that the state agency should educate the younger generation and carry out elder rights protection activities which can be summarized as follows:

- (a) To provide for appropriate education, including educating the public, about the range of available elder justice information, programs and services, training and technical assistance.
- (b) To provide for public education and outreach to promote financial literacy and prevent identify theft and financial exploitation of older individuals.
- (c) To provide public education and outreach to identify and prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of older individuals.

A priority consideration should been given to protecting the rights of older individuals by the public.⁽¹⁴⁾

(3) Provision of an Educational Environment

In order to allow older individuals to enjoy their advancing years both in mind and in body, a supportive educational environment, such as educational facilities and programs, and informational, recreational services should be provided:

- (a) To ensure access by older individuals in the project area to community-based social services as educational, socialization, and recreational activities.
- (b) To prepare, publish and disseminate educational materials dealing with the welfare of older individuals.
- (d) To provide funds in training older individuals in the use of computers and related equipment, in order to improve their self-employment and employment-related technology skills as well as their ability to use the internet.
- (e) To carry out integrated health promotion and disease prevention programs including nutrition education.
- (f) To provide health and nutrition education services to prevent age-related diseases.
- (g) To provide educational services to older individuals including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered, HIV-positive individuals, individuals with Alzheimer's disease and holocaust survivors, as well as their caregivers.

The provision of a supportive educational environment and training services can assist older individuals to better cope with their economic, health, and personal needs through services such as consumer education, continuing education, health education, pre-retirement education, financial planning and other education and training services. Educational and training services have always played significant roles in helping older individuals to enjoy their lives in peace, health and security.⁽¹⁵⁾

(4) Training of Workforces in the Field of Aging

The Act states that the Assistant Secretary shall make grants to institutions of higher education and secondary educational institutions in applied Gerontology in order to meet the needs for personnel and specialists in the field of aging such as:

- (a) To provide educational and training services to develop adequately trained workforces to work with older individual.

- (b) To provide educational and training services to prepare students for careers in the field of aging.

- (c) To develop training programs in the field of aging at schools of public health, education, social work, and psychology, and other appropriate schools within colleges and universities. Institutes of higher education develop graduate programs.

The Act greatly promotes the education and training in developing adequately trained workforces to work with and on behalf of older individuals.⁽¹⁶⁾

4 A Comparative Analysis of Educational Services for the Aging Society between China and the United States

(1) Demographic Background

Only in the past few decades has the attention of society been drawn to the social, economic, political and scientific questions raised by the phenomenon of aging on a massive scale. As referred in Introduction, China, still a developing country, is joining the ranks of aging societies at a rapid pace. On the other hand, as a developed country, the United States relatively has a smaller share of older people comparing with many developed countries. The population aged 65 years and older both in China and the United States makes up about 12% to 13% now, but by the year of 2050, the number is projected to increase to approximately 25% of their total population. In this point of view, China and the United States are sharing the same demographic backgrounds in their aging populations.

(2) Policy Making

The demographic trends outlined above have had significant effects on the societies of both nations. The formulation of policies for the aging society is the responsibility of the both governments. As referred above, China and the United States share the same demographic backgrounds in their aging situations, but the times and backgrounds for the law and policy making are quite different. Under the influence of the world trends, from 1980s China began to recognize the need to pay attention to aging issues. In 1996 the "Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting the Rights and Interests of the Older People" was issued. This is the first law adopted to protect the rights and interests of the older people in the history of China. On the other hand, the

United States Congress passed the law of the "Older Americans Act" as early as 1965, three decades earlier than China.

(3) Basic Concerns

There are a number of similar basic concerns that reflect the general and fundamental values in the policies in both countries. Based on the study about the laws above, the basic concerns for the two countries presented in the policies can be summarized as: (a) to protect legal rights, (b) to ensure opportunities in pursuing the life fulfillment, (c) to ensure access for economic security, (d) to ensure access for health care, (e) to ensure chances in enriching the cultural, educational and recreational lives of the older people. While China emphasized the promoting of Chinese traditional virtues of respecting, providing and helping the older people, the United States emphasized the protection against abuse, neglect and exploitation of the older individuals.

(4) Supportive Research

For both China and the United States, an important component of the policies on aging is research for the needs of older people. The knowledge obtained by research can provide scientific backing for effective social planning as well as improving the well-being of older people.

Referring to research on aging in the Law of China, two aspects are stated. One is that the government should take account of and support the scientific research in the field of aging, and another aspect states in the Law is to develop a statistic information investigation and publication system for older population issues. On the other hand, the research policies on the aging in the United States are far more advanced compared to China. The policies of research cover a much wider range such as on how to meet the needs of older individuals, information related research, research on the causes and prevention of abuse, neglect and exploitation of older individuals. Immediate benefit from proven research knowledge for the older individuals is greatly encouraged and also funds should be provided. Compared with China's abstract policies, the United States not only has a wider range of covering, but also presents a series of concrete policies in the field of research related to older individuals.

(5) Education of the Younger Generation

Recognizing the need to call the public's attention to the serious issues besetting a growing portion of the older population, both China and the United States set objectives to promote nation-wide education for the understanding of the economic, social and cultural impact on the process of development of the aging population. Both countries have many similarities in the field of education of the younger generation to prepare for the aging society. These include policies: (a) to educate the public to understand the situation and impact of the aging society, (b) to educate the younger generation at an early age, in China it is stated that such kind of education should start as early as from kindergarten, (c) to educate the public to protect the rights and interests of older people. While China emphasizes the use of various media to educate the public to respect, take care of and help the older people, the United States emphasizes the education of the public to identify and prevent abuse, neglect, theft and financial exploitation of older individuals. The United States also emphasizes the education of the public about range of available elder justice information, programs and services training and technical assistance.

(6) Provision of Educational Environments

As a basic human right, education must be made available to older people without discrimination. Educational structures in society now are expanding to respond to the educational needs to an entire life span. Such an approach to education suggests the need for continuous adult education, including provision of educational environments for older people. It is important that older people have access to basic literacy education, as well as educational facilities and programs being open for them. Policies both in China and the United States reflect the principles of the right of education for older people. Provision of appropriate and suitable educational environments stated in the laws can be broadly summarized as follows: (a) as a basic human right, older people have the right to receive continued education, (b) the government at all levels must ensure access for the educational, cultural, recreational services for older people, (c) funds should be provided to the educational services for older people, (d) education programs should be developed to meet the needs of older people.

While China proposes that public facilities like museums, libraries, cultural centers, movie theaters are open freely or with preference for older people, in the United States, such kinds of services have been a common policy for a long time. Instead, now the United States adds the attention to more vulnerable people, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals, and HIV-positive individuals, individuals with Alzheimer's disease and holocaust survivors.

(7) Workforce Training

The success of policies allowing older people to enjoy their advancing years in peace, health and security requires a great increase in the number and quality of the personnel and specialists in the field of aging. Both countries encourage higher education and secondary education institutions to develop programs training workforces to meet the needs of the older people. Compare with China, the United States has much more concrete and detailed policies for higher education, including graduate schools, to develop adequately trained workforces in the fields of public health, education, social work, nutrition education and psychology for the older individuals.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Population aging first started in more developed countries, and has recently become apparent in many developing countries. China is still a developing country, whereas the United States is one of the most developed countries. However, China and the United States now share the same proportion of older people. Furthermore, according to the UN population predict, the trend of the increase of the older population will have the same pace in 2050. But referring to the laws and policies on aging, China adopted its law to protect the rights and interests of the older people for the first time in the Chinese history in 1996; on the other hand, the United States issued its first law on aging as early as in 1965, more than 30 years earlier than China. Therefore the United States can be considered to have more experiences in dealing with aging issues, and also can be considered a suitable country which may provide constructive recommendations and suggestions to the policy makers, researchers and educators in the field of gerontology in

China. Therefore based on the knowledge obtained by the comparative study above, the author would like to make some recommendations as follows:

More attention and support should be given to research activities in the field of aging since such research is still a new field in China. Furthermore the research on the aging issues has to across a wide range of areas and needs more concrete planning targeted to improve health, happiness, economic security. Research on how to prevent age-related abuse, neglect, and exploitation of disability, illness and poverty should be promoted. In addition, applied researches should be encouraged and immediate benefit should be made from proven research knowledge.

To educate the whole public to identify and prevent abuse, neglect, theft and financial exploitation of older people. It is very important not only to educate older people about how to protect themselves; it is more important and effective to educate the whole public, including the younger generation and the caregivers, about how to protect older people.

To determine program effectiveness and ensure funding to support the economic, health and other personal needs of older people. A much wider range of educational services such as consumer education, pre-retirement education, and financial planning education should be made available to older people. In addition, the United States is giving special consideration for vulnerable and minority groups such as Native Americans, lesbians, gays and HIV-positive individuals etc. China is also a multi-nation country with 55 minority groups, it is also necessary to give special consideration in the field of education services for their older people.

In order to educate and train adequately trained workforces to work with or on the half of older people, it is not enough to encourage higher education and other educational institutions to train specialists in the field of aging. The government should also support the training of ordinary caregiver as well.

It is the sovereign right and responsibility of each country to formulate the policies on the basis of its specific national

needs and objectives in the context of its own traditions, structures and cultural values. However, there are a number of basic considerations which reflect general and fundamental human values, independent of culture, religion, race and social status. Therefore, the promotion of the services, activities and well-being of the older people should be an essential part of social development both in developed and developing countries. The exchange of information and experience at international level through comparative studies is considered an effective means of stimulating policy making and encouraging the adoption of measures to meet the needs of the aging society. Whereas, China, which has different political, economic and social systems and culture, as well as being at different stage of development, can still benefit from the United States of its experiences and achievements in policy making for the aging society without doubt.

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(平成 25 年 9 月 30 日受付)